



County of San Diego - Parks and Open Space Program
Contributing to the County of San Diego Strategic Plan Environment Initiative
"Promote natural resource management strategies that ensure environmental preservation, quality of life, and economic development"

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Chandra Wallar Joins MSCP On An Eco-tour

An Exploration of San Diego County's Biodiversity

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of the County of San Diego's Land Use and Environment Group, Chandra Wallar, was presented with many facts about San Diego's rich and unique ecology when she accompanied the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) team for an eco-tour this past November. This tour focused on some of the biologically valuable areas in the draft North and East County MSCP Plan Areas.

The tour began in northern San Diego County just east of Highway 76. Tom Oberbauer, Conservation Biologist and Chief of the MSCP team, pointed out the future locations of housing, business and other facilities, including major road improvement projects within the proposed North County MSCP Plan. In some areas near transit and infrastructure, such as the intersection of Interstate 15 and Highway 76, new pedestrian-oriented villages are planned to absorb future growth. As part of these development projects hundreds of acres will be set aside in permanent preservation.

These development projects are designed in a manner that avoids sensitive resources and/or requires mitigation in the form of preserving high-quality habitat. This combination of carefully planned growth and permanent protection of natural lands illustrates a balance between conservation and economic development that is modeled after the MSCP South County Subarea Plan. This same principle is the foundation of the draft North County MSCP Plan and will be utilized in the East County plan.

The next stop on the eco-tour was a hilltop overlooking California's last remaining Mexican Land Grant, Rancho Guejito. Less than a forty-five minute drive from urban communities such as Oceanside and Escondido, this area is known for the dramatic range of ecosystems supported within its approximately twenty thousand undeveloped acres. From Chaparral to Oak Woodlands, Rancho Guejito supports a vast range of plant and animal species, including large mammals that require substantial blocks of land to sustain viable populations.

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Did you know that San Diego County...



- is one of two counties with the greatest level of Rare and Endangered Species in the continental United States?
- has nearly the same number of species as all of the North Atlantic states combined?
- has tremendous variation in climates with an average difference in rainfall of over 40 inches per year?

From left to right, Tracy Cline, Land Use Environmental Planner III with MSCP; Katie Wu, Student Worker with MSCP; Chandra Wallar, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of the Land Use and Environment Group; Dahvia Lynch, Group Program Manager for MSCP; and Brian Albright, Assistant Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation. All the participants hiked to the oldest known conifer in the County.



Groundbreaking for the Beyer Boulevard Staging Area at Otay Valley Regional Park

The groundbreaking ceremony for the Beyer Boulevard Staging Area was held on Friday, September 15, 2006 at the Otay Valley Regional Park. The ceremony was attended by several dignitaries, including County of San Diego Supervisor Greg Cox (District 1), City of San Diego Councilman Ben Hueso, and City of Chula Vista Councilman John McCann.

Amenities at the Beyer Boulevard Staging Area include public parking, picnic areas and an information kiosk with trail maps. The staging area will also include a park ranger station which will provide natural and historical education about the Otay Valley Regional Park, as well as provide information to the public on how they can become involved as park volunteers.

The Beyer Boulevard Staging Area will provide access to a one-mile trail from the Beyer Boulevard Staging Area east to Beyer Way. This trail contains a variety of beautiful and sensitive habitats including riparian woodland, riparian scrub, fresh water marsh, coastal sage scrub, and chaparral. Visitors will have the opportunity to take nature and historical interpretive walks guided by the park staff and volunteers. The Beyer Boulevard Staging Area and its trail will allow the public to learn about local ecology while highlighting the importance of preserving these sensitive habitats for local wildlife and future park visitors.



The Otay Valley Regional Park (OVRP) trails welcome visitors. Photo courtesy of the City of San Diego.

Eco-tour

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Other highlights of the trip included a visit to Hellhole Canyon Open Space Preserve, where Tom Oberbauer identified Cleveland sage (*Salvia clevelandii*) and odorous White Sage (*Salvia apiana*). He explained the wide use of these and other local

plants by native tribes for medicinal, hygienic, and culinary purposes. He also described the wildlife that occupy and travel through the preserve, including California Mountain Lions (*Felis concolor*). County Parks and Recreation Department Assistant Director, Brian Albright, pointed out the durable, camouflaged fencing and facilities recently installed at the Hellhole Canyon Preserve. Much of the infrastructure at Hellhole and in other County parks has been installed and is regularly maintained by active "Friends" volunteer groups throughout the County.

The eco-tour continued in East County up Palomar Mountain, where the participants took a short hike to a large Incense cedar tree, the oldest known conifer in the County (*see photo on page 1*). Along the trail the team saw Dogwood (*Cornus nutallii*) and heard the sounds of several Acorn Woodpeckers (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) resonating throughout the forest.

After the hike, County Ranger Dave Holt met the team for a picnic at Palomar Mountain County Park. Ranger Holt shared the success of the County's Dead, Dying, and Diseased Tree Removal Program. This program was directly responsible for restoring the ecosystem health on many parts of the Mountain and helping make Palomar more fire-safe. He also discussed the popularity of County Parks for local residents. For example, several families regularly visit the Palomar Mountain County Park on Thanksgiving.

On the way down Palomar Mountain, the eco-tour team stopped at the Lake Henshaw Overlook, built by the Cleveland National Forest to take in one of the most expansive inland vistas in San Diego County. The sweeping view of Lake Henshaw and the surrounding valley is one of the few remaining areas where natural features dominate the scenery for miles.

A short drive up Highway 79 leads to one of the County's newly acquired and most recently opened preserves, Santa Ysabel. With a newly completed trail system winding into the hills, this preserve provides visitors with a high likelihood of spotting wildlife on foot or bicycle. The caravan's final stop was the Ramona Grasslands, another model example of compatible conservation and development projects. Over 3,000 acres of land have been conserved through the joint efforts of the County of San Diego, the Nature Conservancy, local developers, and other partners.

The County of San Diego preserve system continues to grow through partnerships with stakeholders throughout San Diego County. We invite you to enjoy the County of San Diego's natural preserve system. To go on your own eco-tour, check our Parks and naturalist events online at <http://www.co.san-diego.ca.us/parks/>



After it rains, fast-running water can wash pollutants down the storm drain.

The Permit is a product of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA). The CWA passed in 1976 and was extended to stormwater concerns in 1990, thus making it illegal to release pollutants into waterways. The Board is responsible for ensuring that federal and state water regulations are implemented at the local level.

Stormwater runoff (also known as “urban runoff” in populated areas) is defined as rainwater that flows over land, roofs and pavements and then enters stormwater infrastructure (i.e. gutters and storm drains). It is important to note that all storm drains in San Diego drain directly to natural waterways without any wastewater treatment. As stormwater runoff flows over various structures and pavements, the water picks up and carries sediments and pollutants such as pesticides, fertilizers, oils, metals, and animal feces down to our streams, lagoons, bays and beaches.

For the above reasons, on-site stormwater management has become one of the critical elements for preventing pollution from entering our storm drains. San Diego jurisdictions are required to reduce the discharge of pollutants in urban runoff to the maximum extent practicable by requiring development to use stormwater best management practices (BMPs). In addition, local jurisdictions must increase monitoring of stormwater runoff and increase street sweeping, inspections and catch-basin cleaning.

At the project level, site planning and project development will see many changes once jurisdictions have updated their local regulations regarding stormwater BMPs. Most notable will be the requirement to implement “Low Impact Development” (LID) for new and redeveloped projects.

LID is a stormwater planning practice that uses decentralized, site-based planning and design strategies to manage the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff. LID attempts to reduce the amount of runoff by mimicking the natural hydrologic function of the site. LID focuses on minimizing impervious surfaces and promoting infiltration and evaporation of runoff before it can leave the location of origin. Using small, economical landscape features, LID techniques work as a system to filter, slow, evaporate, and infiltrate surface runoff at the source.

LID methods are extensions of long-recognized techniques: minimizing paved areas, limits on grading to avoid soil compaction, preservation of trees and natural drainage channels, locating open space areas to absorb overflows, amending soils to assist infiltration, using water-permeable pavements and pavers, and using a range of low-tech “bioretention” options such as rain gardens. Other basic principals include disconnecting impervious surfaces (no large continuously paved areas), disconnecting runoff pathways (no downspouts connected to gutters), and holding and re-using stormwater on-site (cistern irrigation). *Continued on page 4.*

Stormwater pollution is commonly considered the nation’s number one water quality problem. As such, stormwater issues increasingly have become a key consideration in land use planning and development during the last several years in San Diego County. Under San Diego’s Municipal Stormwater Permit (Permit) (Order No. R9-2007-0001) approved in 2001 by the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (Board), all jurisdictions have been required to implement a stormwater program to address these issues.

On January 24, 2007, the Board adopted a new and improved Permit. The revised Permit intends to further reduce the pollution that runs down storm drains into local waterways. San Diego County jurisdictions are mandated by the Permit to regulate developments and existing establishments to comply with stormwater requirements.

“...San Diego jurisdictions must encourage developers to incorporate minimal LID techniques into development projects during the next year.”



San Elijo Lagoon Boardwalk Completed

Ribbon Cutting Well Attended

A crowd gathered and speeches were made for the San Elijo Lagoon Nature Center Boardwalk ribbon cutting on January 24, 2007. The 500-foot boardwalk loops from the parking lot and pavilion area through the riparian corridor to make the first County-operated trail in North County that is accessible to the disabled.



Andy Mauro, President of the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy, talks about the accomplishment of finishing the trail in December 2006.



Supervisor Pam Slater-Price cuts the ribbon to open the new boardwalk amidst the excitement of a local third grade class.

All above photos courtesy of the Department of Parks and Recreation.



This sunny boardwalk is the only nature trail loop approved under the American Disabilities Act that is in a County-managed wetland.

Animal tracks and various riparian species may be seen from the recycled plastic lumber boardwalk. Over 1,000 feet of trail restoration changed the invasive weed-choked area into high-quality habitat. The boardwalk's special design allows for water and wildlife to pass under it. Because the boardwalk crosses over a drainage area that had become impassable in the wet season, it provides a year-round route.

"The new boardwalk trail at San Elijo Lagoon is a great example of the County's commitment to environmental preservation and building safe and livable communities."-Supervisor Pam Slater-Price

County Supervisor Pam Slater-Price (District 3), Department of Parks and Recreation Director Renée Bahl, and President Andy Mauro of the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy each spoke about the trail. After the ribbon cutting ceremony, the crowd, which consisted of a local third grade class, staff from the Department of Parks and Recreation, and members of the public, hiked the new boardwalk.

Completion of the boardwalk was possible only with the cooperation of the Spight Foundation, Carl & Christina Fredericks and Mac & Audrey Elliott, the City of Encinitas Community Grant Program, District 3 Community Projects, the County of San Diego, and the San Diego Women's Foundation.

"Low Impact Development" Continued from page 3

help developers mimic the site's hydrological function. BMPs will include directing runoff to natural and landscaped areas, man-made filtration devices such as small vegetated swales, rain gardens, permeable pavements and pavers, and the use of cisterns to store and re-use runoff as an irrigation source. These LID BMPs can be applied to areas of residential, commercial, industrial, and municipal development.

As part of the revised Permit, San Diego jurisdictions must encourage developers to incorporate minimal LID techniques into development projects during the next year. The jurisdictions must also collectively establish feasibility and applicability criteria and develop specific LID requirements during the next 18 months. Once these specific criteria and requirements have been established and the Board has found them to be adequate, the jurisdictions will have one year to incorporate the requirements into their local codes and ordinances. Therefore, by the year 2010, the County and other local jurisdictions will each have an updated Stormwater Program with a comprehensive list of BMPs, including the new LID requirements.

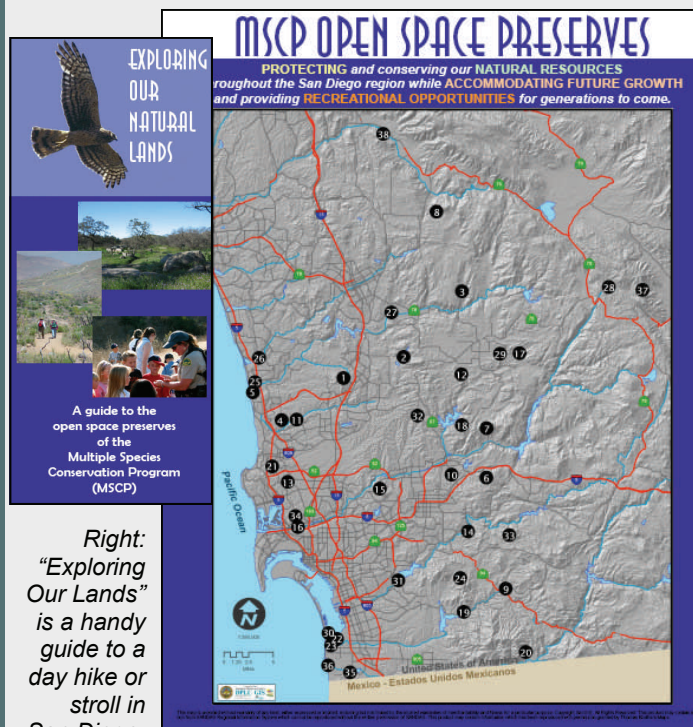
The MSCP-Watershed Planning Division has been developing a LID Manual to assist land developers with the selection of these various design features. The Manual will include a full selection of LID BMPs to



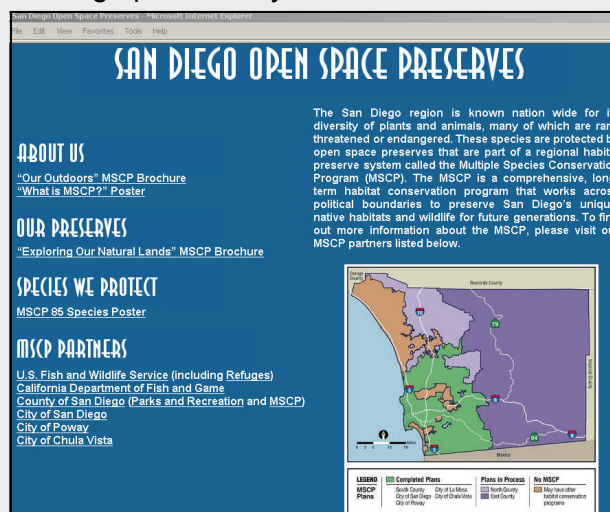
Online Access to San Diego's Open Space Preserves

There are two new ways to discover the ins and outs of the Open Space Preserves in San Diego. You can go to the new California Department of Fish and Game Website, "San Diego Open Space Preserves," or you can view the new online brochure "Exploring Our Natural Lands."

The new Website is found at www.SDpreserves.org and serves as a gateway to MSCP and its partners. It has links to the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Game, the County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation, MSCP, and the Cities of San Diego, Poway, and Chula Vista. There are also maps and links to brochures about the San Diego preserve system.



Right: "Exploring Our Lands" is a handy guide to a day hike or stroll in San Diego.



Left: The new partners' Website will give you access to information on many environmental organizations.

One of the links on the partners' Website is called "Exploring Our Natural Lands" MSCP Brochure.' The new four-page brochure can be also visited by copying the following link: http://dplu-mscp.sdcounty.ca.gov/pub_out/FINAL_OSP_Brochure.pdf. The brochure contains a map of all the Open Space Preserves in San Diego County as well as a list of the hours, facilities and allowed uses at each location.

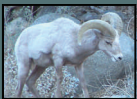


Mitra Abidi takes time out of her busy student schedule to volunteer with the County's MSCP.

Making a Difference: MSCP Gains a Volunteer

Mitra Abidi began volunteering with the County MSCP team in November 2006. She plans to transfer to San Francisco State within the year to pursue a degree in Environmental Studies, with a focus on conservation and public outreach. In her free time she enjoys hiking, making jewelry, and traveling. Her interest in nature has inspired her to travel to many national parks to enjoy their beauty. She spent last summer working with the Human Rights Campaign, as well as a non-profit environmental group raising money for stricter laws on CO2 emissions in California.

When asked about her time with MSCP, she replied, "Volunteering here is giving me a great look into the world of conserving natural resources, and I'm excited to get a head start in the line of work I plan on doing."



MSCP Highlighted Species: Bighorn Sheep



Eastern San Diego County is home to over 250 sensitive species including the Peninsular Bighorn Sheep (*Ovis canadensis*). Bighorn Sheep can be found in the Anza Borrego Desert State Park as well as in the surrounding unincorporated desert communities. In February, Kim Zuppiger, Project Manager for the East County MSCP, went for a hike up the Palm Canyon trail located in the Anza Borrego Desert State Park. Sightings are rare and, although she has visited the desert several times over the years, this was her first encounter with the bighorn sheep. Half way up the trail she spotted a female sheep, known as a "ewe," with her young. Then she heard a loud sound coming from the riverbed below and discovered three male Sheep butting heads. She snapped the photos seen in this article.

The male sheep are called "rams" and will butt heads to determine dominance. When running at each other they can reach up to 20 miles an hour. They live in groups of about two to five sheep. Rams have bigger horns than the female sheep. Their horns can weigh up to 30 pounds. Ewes live in larger groups of five to one hundred. They will form larger groups during the winter. Both the ram and the ewe have deer-like fur that is commonly brown with white patches on the rump.

Bighorn sheep are usually found in alpine meadows and mountain and foothills with rocky slopes. The bighorn sheep's range changes seasonally. When it is warm, they graze on grasses, clover and sedges on mountain slopes. When it is colder, they travel to the valleys for bushy plants like holly and cactus. If green vegetation is available for food, the bighorn sheep will not need drinking water. Without green vegetation, they will usually visit watering holes every three days.

Bighorn sheep have been federally listed as endangered since 1998 due to a substantial population decrease. The County's MSCP team is coordinating our conservation planning efforts with the Anza Borrego State Park and many other public and private entities to protect the bighorn sheep and their habitat.



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